PERSONAL DECORATION AND ORNAMENTS

being treated in this manner, and it seemed to be a somewhat painful process. However, "*Il faut souffrir pour être belle*," and these women do endure considerable discomfort in the course of their toilet.

The toffee-like substance described above is also used by women in a similar way in order to pull out any hairs that may be growing on their legs.

Most women and girls paint round the eyes with antimony (Arabic, *koḥl*). It is kept in a small bottle, generally of glass, called *mikḥaleh*, and is applied with a short stick with a blunt point. It is regarded not only as a beautifier, but also as a cure for sore eyes.

Scent is used by both sexes, some of it being of a very pungent nature. In some parts of Egypt it is taboo for a man to use scent while his wife is suckling her child. If he disobeys this rule the child, it is said, will come out all over in spots. A man whom I knew well used some scent on one occasion while his wife was still suckling their youngest-born. The child got nasty spots all over its body, and the mother told me that it was her husband's fault, because he had been putting some scent on his moustache!

I have sometimes heard English people remark on the dirty habit that the Egyptian peasant women have of wearing long dresses which trail over the ground, brushing up the dust in clouds as they go along. It is, of course, a very insanitary practice, but the wearing of short skirts would be looked upon as most immodest. A woman's legs should never be exposed, except from dire necessity. There is also another reason for the trailing skirts. Most peasant women walk barefooted, and so leave clearly defined footprints in the dry, dusty soil. A woman can be injured magically through her foot-prints, and so the long skirt acts as a safeguard, brushing over and thus obliterating them.

Little girls wear very bright-coloured cotton frocks, which reach almost to the ground (see Fig. 17). The women and older girls may wear such frocks indoors, but when they walk abroad, either to shop, to fill their water-jars, or to visit their friends, they wear a long black dress over the coloured one, and a thick veil, shawl-shaped, over their heads.

I was told by a friend some few years ago that in Sharḳīyeh Province the women wear long white veils, on which are several gold or silver ornaments. These ornaments are in the form of

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
COPTS MR10

the horse, he is paraded through the village, accompanied by musicians. If two brothers are to have this operation at the same time they ride together on one horse. When the perambulation of the village is over the boy is taken home, and all the friends who have placed money on his face, and also the barber, are provided with supper. Music plays an important part at this ceremony, and the musicians keep up a constant beating of drums, clashing of cymbals, and blowing of bagpipes. When the guests have finished supper they all, including the musicians, take their departure. On the following morning the barber only comes to the house and is first paid by the parents, who give him anything from one or two pounds upward. The child is then taken hold of and told not to be afraid. Some one tries to attract his attention, while the barber seizes this opportunity to cut off the foreskin. The boy wears a white *gallabīyeh* for this occasion, with long sleeves, in one of which the foreskin is tied up. The barber then ties the boy's mother and maternal aunt together by binding a turban round their throats, and drags them outside the door of the house. Friends, who by this time have collected outside, come into the house and present the barber with more money, and he then takes his departure. The wound is washed every day, and is anointed with some healing powder, which is, I fancy, *ḥenna*. The foreskin remains in the sleeve of the boy's *gallabīyeh* until the wound is healed, during which period the white gown must also be worn.

FIG. 40. CAP WORN BY A BOY AT HIS CIRCUMCISION CEREMONY

A charm consisting of short lengths of the mid-rib of a palm-branch, deeply notched along one side, is worn by boys after they have been circumcised to keep the wound from going septic, and to ward off the evil eye. Such a charm is worn for seven days after the operation, being suspended from the neck by a string.

No reason could be given as to why the mother and maternal aunt were tied together by the throat and thrust out of the house.

FERTILITY RITES

Women also come here if they are experiencing difficulty in suckling their children, and donkeys which are not producing sufficient milk for their young are likewise driven here. The ceremony is the same as that for childlessness, and after its performance the milk is supposed to be much increased in quantity.

Many years ago my brother, Dr A. M. Blackman, recorded a custom of hanging skins of foxes over the doors of houses in Lower Nubia.[1] On inquiry he found that they were believed to be charms "to protect the women of the household, preventing miscarriages, and helping them in labour." In some parts of Egypt if a mother wants another child she will attach a small piece of fox's skin to the head of her last-born living child. After doing this she hopes that her wish will be granted.

The pollen of a male palm is used as a charm to produce fertility; some of it is mixed in water, which is drunk by the woman who wishes to have a child. The fertilization of the female palm with such pollen might naturally account for the belief in its efficacy as a charm to cure a woman of barrenness.

It is believed that if a woman who has lately had a child goes to see another woman who has recently given birth to a child which did not survive, the latter will not conceive again. The happy mother whose child lives must wait until her friend's child has been dead for fifteen days, when all danger of seeing her will be over. However, should such an unfortunate visit be paid before the fifteen days have expired, the bereaved mother must counteract the danger of future childlessness by visiting the tomb of her dead child and going through the ceremony of stepping over its body already described. She may as an alternative choose one of the other rites for the same purpose.

I will now describe some of the methods employed to prevent conception. One I have mentioned already in connexion with the stones in and beside the pool. If an expectant mother wishes to have no more children for a certain period she will take the seeds of a castor-oil plant and, on the day after her child is born, she will eat one of the seeds if she wishes to be without another child for one year, two if for two years, and so on. This is believed to be invariably effective. If a woman has a spite against another who wishes to have a child she may secretly insert some castor-oil seeds into her food, and so render her unable to conceive.

[1] *Man*, vol. ix (1909), pp. 9 f.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

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854

are less ignorant, and learn to realize the importance of keeping their babies clean, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the doctors to combat the many eye-diseases that cause so much suffering to hundreds of the peasants. With conditions as they are, cures for sore and inflamed eyes are much in demand and are numerous. The following are some of the remedies for eye-trouble employed by the village medicine-man or medicine-woman.

757
278
756
756
291

FIG. 121. A MEDICINE-WOMAN PASSING A PIECE OF MAIZE-STALK ROUND A FEMALE PATIENT'S HEAD TO CURE HER OF ILLNESS

The medicine-woman whose methods of healing I described above has a great reputation as an eye-doctor. Those who suffer from inflamed eyes and swollen eyelids often resort to her for treatment. She takes a lump of sugar, and, turning back the inflamed eyelid, rubs it inside with the sugar. "Black blood" comes away after this operation, so I was told. She then takes a large onion, extracts the juice, and mixes with it some salt. This concoction she drops into the eyes of her patient. "It is very painful," my informant told me, but she added that it did a lot of good. While the woman is rubbing the inside of the eyelid with the lump of sugar her patients often stop up their ears with their fingers, as this is supposed to decrease the pain of the operation. For three days afterward the eye, or eyes, must be kept covered with a handkerchief, so that no air can get in. At the end of the three days the woman gives her patient a second dose of the onion

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MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

THE VILLAGE MEDICINE-MAN

juice and salt, and a few minutes later drops a mixture of *tūtia*[1] and honey under the lids. It is believed that after this the inflammation will quickly disappear.

In another village farther south there is also a woman who is regarded as an eye-specialist, and her knowledge of her art, together with one of the objects she employs, has been handed down in her family for two or three generations, so she told me. She has a large shell, called in Arabic *maḥāreh*, and a black stone called *ḥagar eṭ-ṭarfā* (stone of the tamarisk). She makes eye-medicine by first wetting the inner, concave surface of the shell, and then rubbing it with the stone (Fig. 122). She thus produces a white liquid which the peasants call 'milk.' They believe, as does the woman herself, that this 'milk' comes from the stone, whereas it comes, of course, from the powdering of the surface of the shell by rubbing the stone against it. The liquid is believed to be an excellent medicine for sore eyes, and people in her village who are suffering from that complaint visit the woman and get her to drop some of her medicament into their eyes. This eye-medicine is known in other parts of Egypt

FIG. 122. THE FEMALE EYE-SPECIALIST HOLDING HER SHELL AND BLACK STONE, WHICH ARE SHOWN BELOW

[1] Sulphate of zinc.

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MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Copts MR10

THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

as well, but the people make it and apply it themselves, without resorting to any medicine-man or -woman. The shells are found in the desert, so that when one is worn out it is not difficult to get a fresh supply. The stones used are also said to come from the desert.

A certain sheikh, who combined the profession of magician with that of a doctor, told me that he often prescribed the following cure for inflammation of the eyes. Some lotus-leaves are pounded in a mortar and then mixed with goat's milk. The eyelids are bathed with this preparation two or three times a day, when all the fever disappears, and the eyes soon recover. A remedy of his for an eye that is injured from a blow is to take some palm-leaves and, after thoroughly washing them, put them in a mortar and crush the juice out with a pestle. Some salt is mixed with this juice and the mixture dropped on to the injured eye. Three applications, so he says, effect a cure. The woman eye-doctor last mentioned has a different cure for an eye injured by violence. She rubs her shell with the stone as before, and, mixing the liquid with molasses, bathes the eye with this preparation.

If a man is suffering from sore or watery eyes he must get two drams of opium and two drams of the seeds of *er-rashād* (nasturtium). These he must grind up together and mix with the white of an egg. Placing the preparation upon a piece of cotton material, he applies it to his eye or eyes. This is the prescription of a Coptic magician, who says that it is an absolute cure.

The peasants quite realize the value of massage, and both a male and a female exponent of the art are to be found in many of the villages. Their services are employed in obstinate cases of constipation as well as for the curing of pain in the back and limbs. A man or woman who is suffering from a pain in the back is sometimes treated in the following way. The 'doctor' makes his patient lie on the ground, face downward, and ties his ankles together with a rope, while with another rope his hands are tied behind his back. The 'doctor' then places his foot on the exact spot in the patient's back where he feels the pain, and, grasping with both hands the ends of the ropes which tie the man's hands and ankles, draws them upward, his foot pressing down the spine. Probably a crack will soon be heard, or the patient himself will feel that something has gone into place again in his back, and he will be cured. A woman attends

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MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

members of her own sex, and gives them the same somewhat drastic treatment.

A headache is sometimes cured in the following way. The magician in his capacity as medicine-man writes out a charm, which is hung on the patient's head over the spot where the pain is greatest. The charm must be written in a circle, and is, of course, in Arabic. Fig. 123 is an exact copy, only transliterated.

Sīdī Aḥmed el-Bedawī is one of the most celebrated sheikhs in Egypt. His tomb is at Ṭanṭa, where a great festival is held in his honour every year.

The following is a prescription for a disordered spleen. The magician fetches leaves of *el-atl* (tamarisk), pours red vinegar on them, and boils this mixture on the fire, afterward pressing it through a sieve. The patient must drink a coffee-cup of this medicine early in the morning, repeating the dose for seven days, during which time he must eat no solid food, but should drink soup made by boiling a fowl.

FIG. 123. CHARM TO CURE A HEADACHE

Distention of the stomach is a very common complaint among the peasants, due, of course, to acute indigestion. In some parts of Egypt a boiled crow is prescribed as a cure for this complaint, and the patient, I am told, quickly experiences relief after eating this most repulsive food. Another more reasonable cure is prescribed by a medicine-man of my acquaintance. A small quantity of flour is mixed with a little yeast early in the morning; this must be left to rise in the sun till mid-day, when sufficient water is mixed with it to form a liquid. Soon after taking some of this preparation the patient must drink some soup made by boiling a fowl. The bowels will then act, and relief be soon experienced.

If a woman is suffering from prolonged labour, and birth is difficult, her relatives will call in the aid of a magician. He writes two charms, in the form of two magic squares, on two separate pieces of paper. One square is suspended by a string from the woman's waist, so that the inscribed paper hangs over her left

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MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

THE VILLAGE MEDICINE-MAN

Each leaf should be rolled up separately, tied up with string, and hung round the child's neck. It is believed that as soon as the leaves dry the child's coughing will stop.

This prescription, given as a cure for a cough, is, so I was told by the sheikh who prescribed it, very old. Some seeds of the cotton-plant which have been dried over the fire are pounded up into a powder. The patient should take some of this dry, early in the morning and also at night.

There are a number of cures for various diseases which are well known to the people themselves, so that it is not always necessary to call in the aid of the 'doctor.' Among the large number which I have collected are the following.

Cure for a cough. A bunch of camel's hair is placed on the chest of the patient, and another bunch on the top of the head, the hair being first steeped in oil. Both bunches are kept in position by large handkerchiefs bound round the body and over the head. This is believed to make the patient perspire, after which the cough goes. This cure is used for children only.

FIG. 125. CHARM TO CURE A CHILD'S COUGH

A man who lives in a small Upper Egyptian village began, two or three years ago, to suffer from rheumatism in his legs. He got worse and worse, until he was so crippled that he was unable to walk. He consulted several doctors, so I was told, but they could do him no good. One day, when some of his friends came to see him, he told them how useless was all the medical treatment he had received. They therefore persuaded him to try the following remedy. Having made several cuts in both legs, he took some garlic and squeezed the juice of it over the cuts, rubbing it well in. The pain was awful, and the man wept from the agony. However, he persisted in the treatment every day for a fortnight. Each day a lot of pus came away—"yellow water" it was called when I was told about this remedy—and each day he got better, and the

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MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

753 pain from the rheumatism less. The incisions were made once
757 only, but the juice from the garlic was squeezed over the cuts every
978 day. At the end of a fortnight, so I was told, the man was completely cured! I fancy that the peasants believe that the rheumatism, or, at any rate, the cause of it, comes away in what they call "the yellow water."

755 Sometimes a silk thread is drawn through the skin in the region of the stomach as a cure for a pain in that organ. The skin is picked up between the finger and thumb, and a needle threaded with silk is passed through it lengthways. The silk thread is then roughly tied and left in the skin for about six days. Then it is drawn slightly to the left or right, when it is probably found to be covered with pus. A day or two after it is drawn in the opposite direction, when more pus will be removed. This process is repeated on several successive days, until all signs of pus have disappeared. There is a raised scar left when the skin has healed. Sometimes a silk thread is drawn through the outer edge of the upper part of the ear as a cure for fever, in the case both of children and grown-up people. To cure pain in the side, stomach, or back a small plain ring is inserted in the upper edge of the ear.

A person suffering from a cough takes one of the strings which form the warp of a reed mat and places one end on the top of his head, holding it there, while the other end is passed round one of his toes, or is held on the ground by his feet. The string is then [764] placed inside the wrappings of a person who has just died, and is thus carried to the grave. The cough of the living person disappears. The same remedy is employed for fever and shivering, only a knot must then be made near one end of the string.

978 As a cure for diarrhœa some leaves from a sycamore are dried
757 in the oven, or in the sun if it is very hot. When dry the leaves are pounded into a powder, of which the patient takes two teaspoonfuls, mixed with a little sugar, every morning. It usually takes two days to effect a cure, though it may sometimes take a little longer.

As a cure for inflamed or sore eyes the dung of a black donkey (a male) is made hot in the fire, put in a piece of muslin, and then applied. This treatment must be repeated constantly, a fresh poultice being administered as soon as the first is cold, and so on till the eye is cured. After a time, according to my informant, a

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MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

lot of water will come from the eye, and then it will be found that all the inflammation has disappeared.

The Arabs have a custom of attempting to cure sores, headaches, and other complaints by branding with red-hot nails. A man came to me on one occasion with a terrible skin disease on his hands and wrists. An Arab had burnt him in several places across both wrists, and these burns, having become septic, had, of course, made him much worse. I dressed his hands every day till I left the village, by which time he was much better.

A similar remedy is sometimes employed for fever or for nervous disorder. A fire of cow-dung (the ordinary household fuel) is lit, and some iron nails are placed in it till they are red-hot. The patient then squats on the ground with his arms tightly folded in front, and a man holds him securely in this attitude. Another man removes a nail from the fire, and with it burns one or two places on the back of the patient's neck. The nervous trouble supposed to be cured by this means is that caused by seeing an apparition in the fields at night or by some other alarming manifestation. One is inclined to speculate on the state of the patient's nerves *after* undergoing this exceedingly painful treatment!

The following is a cure for a broken bone. Some gum is obtained from an acacia-tree, and, after being pounded and passed through a fine sieve, is mixed with water. This mixture is spread on a piece of thick brown paper, which is then placed immediately over the injured part of the body. It is left in this position for a week, when it is removed, for by that time it is believed that the broken bone will have united again.

When visiting the market on market-day at one village I saw a man seated a short distance from the crowds of buyers and sellers. On approaching him I found that children suffering from very sore and inflamed eyes were being brought to him by their mothers. On examining the eyes of a child he remarked, "Yes, he has got them," and told the mother, who was sitting on the ground in front of him, to hold the child face-downward. He then placed one hand on the back of the child's head, and with the other he gently rubbed its eyes (Fig. 126). Almost immediately numbers of tiny grubs fell from them on to the ground, where I saw them wriggling about. He did this with each child in turn, usually with the same result. I have seen him remove grubs from the eyes of children on more than one occasion, and I have never been able

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MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Copts MR10

SUPERSTITIONS

F 119 754 755 753

passed, "*Mā shā' Allāh, mā shā' Allāh; ṣalla 'a 'n-Nebi, ṣalla 'a 'n-Nebi,*" as fast as they could speak.

Another year, when I was again visiting this village, I contracted a bad chill, accompanied by fever. Some of the village women insisted on seeing me, and, with many head-shakings, declared that it was the evil eye again, and in any case they must make the usual test to see. Alum was burned in a fire placed in a pottery saucer, and while it was burning it was carefully watched by my village friends. Alum, when thus being heated, forms a lot of little bubbles, which the peasants call 'eyes,' and the women watching this process remarked on the number of eyes that had been cast at me, and that it was no wonder I was ill. When the alum becomes a charred mass it is supposed to assume a male or female form. In this instance it assumed both, so it was decided that the harm done to me had been committed by both a man and a woman. Sometimes the alum, after being burned, is submitted to an old woman, who is supposed to be able to tell who the actual culprit is. After this test, in my case, several presents of incense were sent to me by my poor neighbours. The Coptic priest, then living in the desert monastery near by, also sent me some, which, he said, had been blessed in the church. All this incense was, at different times, burned in the room where I lay ill, the saucer in which it was burning being passed over me seven times. As I got decidedly better a day or two later it was, of course, credited to the incense, which had, so they believed, destroyed the harm done to me by the evil eye.

F [208] [980]

F [751]

FIG. 133. NECKLACE WORN BY A YOUNG CHILD TO AVERT THE EVIL EYE

F C 755 754

Blue beads, and necklaces made of them, are worn by women and children (Fig. 133) as protective charms against this supposed evil; and animals are decorated with blue cotton tassels and strings of beads, with the same end in view. Red is also an effective charm, and I have often noticed, as a string of camels has passed by me in the cultivation or in the desert, that the leading animal is wearing red tassels or blue beads, or both, round its neck. The

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2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
COPTS MR10

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thus thrown away. I have not as yet come across this custom myself.

F [515] [823]

On this day most of the people rise very early and go into the fields, spending the entire day out of doors. The men, at any rate in Fayūm Province, usually bathe in the Yūsuf Canal, the water of which is supposed to possess special ***barakeh*** on this occasion.[1]

F 796 789 278

On *Yōm Sabt en-Nūr*—the Sabbath, or Saturday, of the Light—people of both sexes and of all ages put into their eyes a small

F C [297]

FIG. 149. PALM-BRANCHES PLAITED INTO VARIOUS SHAPES, USED IN A COPTIC CHURCH ON PALM SUNDAY

F [576]

quantity of powder made from the placenta of a cat dried and pounded.[2] It is believed to make the eyes beautiful. To be told that you have the eyes of a cat is a great compliment (see p. 220).

C 796

On the Coptic Palm Sunday it is the custom to plait the leaves of palm-branches, without their being removed from the mid-rib, into a variety of forms, many of which are very intricate. Sometimes a round loaf of Eucharistic bread is enclosed within the plaited leaves. These palm-branches are taken to the church for the service held on this occasion. The illustration (Fig. 149) shows a group of men holding their palms, which they had taken to the church belonging to a Coptic monastery in the desert close

[1] See p. 33.

[2] *Cf.* E. W. Lane, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 223.

and hygienic. There is no woman who does not use this inexpensive cosmetic, both for herself and for her children. On a holiday or when she is tired, she neatly applies it with a kind of stylet dipped into the phial of black.

Circumcision is a therapeutic, tattooing a scarification, henna a poultice, *kohl* an eye-salve; for these aesthetic devices also serve the fellaheen as preventives or remedies. At the same time they also represent magical rites: circumcision is an act of consecration, tattooing has a symbolic value, henna is a commemorative, *kohl* keeps off the evil eye. Thus a luxury is never devoid of meaning or utility.

The fellaheen do not bathe for pleasure or for cleanliness. They have enough contact with water at their work, or in their Moslem ritual ablutions (**). Every evening these ablutions of hands, feet, face and private parts assure, at least to the men, a minimum of cleanliness. The children splash about naked as soon as they can, or whenever the beasts have to be watered. The women go into the water dressed and in groups, to wash their dirty clothes and themselves at the same time. For this they use clay or a piece of wood, and occasionally soap. In many villages the women never have a thorough wash, except on the occasion of their marriage, and once a year at the Great Bairam.

The dress of the fellaheen constitutes the distinguishing mark of Egypt. While many everyday actions and customs are common to the peasantry of all countries, or at least to all those who are poor, or live in Moslem lands, the fellah differs from them all in his manner of dress, which is immediately recognisable. Yet there is nothing picturesque or fanciful about it, no complication or embroidery such as distinguishes the village dress of Syria and Palestine.

The men wear on their heads the simplest form of covering, a mere skull-cap, which gives no protection against the sun. This brownish felt cap or *libda* is so distinctive of the poor fellah that its very name has furnished him with a title. He is often called *abu libda*, the fellow with a cap, figuring in many a popular tale. Sometimes, and in the case of boys almost always, the cap is made of white calico (*taqiya*). On special occasions, if the fellah is better off or more pious, particularly in the south, he will wind round his cap a long white cloth which serves to protect his neck. This is due to Moslem influence. A good *libda* is deep, and should come

branches in use to adorn the bride's canopy and the tombs of the dead. 245

The day after his wedding the bridegroom strips a palm branch, splits it at the point and goes to touch his friends with it for good luck. To strike a man with a green palm branch brings blessing. Palms to the fellah are like flowers, and there can be no procession or wedding or funeral without them. [585 777]

The pollen of a male date-palm mixed with water is a charm against childlessness. On the other hand, to swallow one, two, or three date-stones will prevent childbearing for as many years. 777 842

Magic and medicine are confused in the traditional use of the products of the earth to preserve or recover health. The startling pharmacopœia of the fellaheen is to be put down partly to experience but chiefly to superstition. They have taken whatever came to hand and used it : for the bowels an infusion of palm or maize leaves ; for the eyes onion juice or charred cotton ; for broken bones acacia gum ; for swellings or rheumatism bandages of hemp. The treatment clearly depends on what plants they have within reach, and the effect, in great part, on credulity. 785 757 278

These peasant traditions, unquestioned and irresistible, are largely superstitious. Miss Blackman gives the greater part of her book (**) to describing superstition in its thousand forms, as if the whole life of the fellaheen were passed in these sub-rational affairs. Too much weight, probably is laid on fellah superstitions. They arerec orded with a certain condescension, and in spite of all that has been published on the subject there are still many gaps. However, there is no point in enriching the collection, since there is nothing original in it. Most of these customs are common to the whole of the East or to Islam. The rest, which go back beyond Christianity to ancient Egypt, are one more illustration of the changelessness which was the subject of our first chapter. 183 171 178

It is certain that these benumbing practices of the fellaheen are even more effective than their manner of life in isolating them and bringing about that withdrawal which 'man creates for himself by the whole structure which he founds on his own labour'. To a way of living which itself weighs him to the ground the fellah adds the burden of these ritual observances.

I

THE TAḲRÎFA

THIS is common in the villages and in most of the cities. It affects the person afflicted with *ḳarfa*, which is chronic intestinal catarrh. The manner of treatment is such that it forces upon the sick person strict dieting, so that he only eats a little bread with salt and pepper after midday. In the morning he goes daily to the " old woman " who seats him before her with his lower extremities extended, while she remains behind him stretching her limbs out in the same way. Then she squeezes him with her hands against her chest, and rubs his stomach with increasing violence. After all this she squeezes his head, for the space of half an hour, with great force, the result of which is often death. She does all this without heeding or fearing evil consequences.

And would that she were satisfied with what she has now done after this manner ! But now she brings a piece [p. 9] of cloth which she wraps round the neck of the patient (the dumb animal ! nay, the deaf stone !) and chokes him until he loses consciousness. She thinks nothing of this, although such an " operation " often results in the death of the wretched patient. (We may seek to excuse her by saying that it is not her fault. because the rules of the " prescription " force her to do it) Next she repeats that operation many times in succession and ends up by giving the patient half a lemon dipped in a mixture of oven ashes, salt and black pepper. Sometimes the invalid has to endure this for a full month.

As for the diet, it is the best part of the medicine ; but there is no merit in that due to the old woman, because she does not order it with the intention of healing the sick, but to make the rubbing of his stomach easy for herself. The extraordinary thing is that she asserts that the whole of the benefit is in the

harm, this stone rescues one from harm after one has fallen. Both in the case of a confined woman, and also of those afflicted with purulent ophthalmia, it is rubbed and its water drunk.[1] Our experience is that the harm done by the *kabbās* is greater than that done by the rest of its brethren which are strung with it on the cord of absurdities and vanities, because the harm of these is limited to their delaying the patient from calling in a doctor; but *it* is harmful on account of its rubbing upon the *maḥār* (or mother of pearl shell which is employed), as a result of which hard particles fly off which do not agree with the ailing eye, for when they are put into it the cornea becomes ulcerated. As is obvious, there is extreme danger in this.

V

TREATMENT FOR THOSE AFFLICTED WITH LEPROSY AND SYPHILIS

SELDOM do the people of the villages and the remote places treat themselves properly for the diseases which trouble them. In consequence you see among them people afflicted with leprosy, syphilis and elephantiasis. When these diseases sorely oppress them, they go off to the village of Balkamūna in the Gharbīya Province, where there is to be found a man famous in all the provinces of Lower Egypt, named Al-Ḥāgg Aḥmed. They complain to him of their pain. He immediately uncovers the patient, splits the flesh of his back and extracts from it pieces of the muscles or sinews. He then sprinkles over the wound certain powders, the best known of which is blue

[1] [This last statement requires some elucidation. The *ḥagar-al-kabbās* is a small stone which is rubbed on a mother-of-pearl shell (*maḥāra*) into which drops of water from a *ḳulla*, or earthenware jar, are let fall. This water becomes whitish after a little, and is then drunk by the patient, or in the case of eye-disease, as mentioned above, it is used as an eye-lotion. Hence the injury done by the particles of the shell to the cornea. Miss W. S. Blackman in her book, *The Fellaḥin of Upper Egypt* (p. 203) mentions this "cure" and gives an interesting photographic record. She asserts, however, that it is called *ḥagar eṭ-ṭarfā* (stone of the tamarisk). Tr.]

tutty (sulphate of copper), the very thing which hastens the destruction of the patient. Do not enquire about the wealth of this quack. I have been informed on good authority that he died last year leaving 35 feddāns [or acres] of very rich and extremely fertile land [p. 17], as well as jewelry to the amount of £800 worth, in spite of the fact that a few years previously he did not possess a thread or a date stone. His practice has been inherited by his eldest son, who even to-day continues to disseminate errors and absurdities among the foolish natives.

For those who are leprous they use a recipe very well-known among the " old women " from ancient times. It is (as follows) to eat every morning for ten days the heads of scorpions, dried over the fire. Then the patient will be cured—if Allah permits it—or else he will perish at the hands of the minions of Satan the Accursed.

There is no doubt that syphilis, leprosy, and elephantiasis are among the most grievous diseases before which many physicians stand abashed. Accordingly it is necessary that those so diseased should make haste to present themselves before a skilled physician, because the drugs which may effect a cure are not easily procurable in the villages. In any case one should employ for syphilis, in the first stages, compounds of mercury ; and, in the second, iodide of potassium and other compounds. As for leprosy, the cure of it is entrusted to the future. In the case of elephantiasis there is no other way but to call in a surgeon.

VI

RĪḤ AL-MASH'ŪMĀT

This word is made to embrace piles and dysentery. Some people claim [p. 18] that they have been endowed with the faculty of rooting out these diseases. Such a person is a woman in the neighbourhood of Farnawī, one of the villages in the district of Shubrakhīt. When anyone suffering from relaxation

life out of him. As for the Moor, whenever he noticed any slackening or fatigue on the part of these two beaters, he encouraged them to keep on by saying, "The *jinnī* is about to depart. Your sick one will soon be healed by the expulsion of this cursed son of an unbeliever who rebels against the Faith."

Feelings of pity incited me to restrain the beaters from their work, but the patient's father reproached me, and told me not to interfere with what did not concern me. So I returned home, in wonderment at what I had seen.

X

"THE LODGER" (*NAZĪL*)

"Said an old hag, There has come to me
A *jinnī*, who stays with me as a "lodger,"
Come ye to him, and come again soon,
That he may cure your sick!"

A CERTAIN old hag will assert that a *jinnī* keeps her company, and is like a husband to her. He reveals to her knowledge of the unseen and informs her about all the medicaments that the sick require. There is one such who is famous, an old wife in the Province of Buḥaira, in the village of Ḳahūḳīya, and there is another in the village [p. 28] of Umm Ḥakīm. The former has surpassed the latter, because her *'afrīt* (whom she names Shaikh Sīd Aḥmed) is very pious. Women come to her from all directions, and bring her presents of money. (The money of course which is brought to the Shaikh, is called a *present*, not a *payment*). The procedure is, the "old wife" enters a darkened chamber, locks the door securely, and remains in it for a short time. Then she returns to her clients with some drugs, which she asserts her Shaiṭān (or devil) has requisitioned from remote districts and distant lands by means of his "assistants." She tells them to take these medicaments

because the *Jinn* (lit. the "Helpers") have brought some of them from India, and others from Sind or from the land near to the mountains of Ḳāf,[1] and other such nonsense and absurdities, "*as to which Allah has sent down no authority.*"[2]

Sometimes certain of the women request her to allow them to enter the darkened chamber that they may participate in the "blessing" (*baraka*) of the *'Afrīt*, to enable them to obtain their ends. (For this she receives another "tip.") One of them thereupon enters the chamber which is pitch black. After a short time she hears either a weak voice, or a loud one which utters the name of her sick one, or her own name, if she be the patient, and explains to her the date of the illness which has afflicted her or her sick one. It assures her that its "helpers" have undergone great suffering and distress in the course of producing the beneficent antidote (or rather the maleficent poison) from the ends of the inhabited world, and that the invalid will be cured after a few days.

[p. 29.] The truth of the matter is that the ill-omened old hag has employed certain women (who consider themselves brokers or traffickers, and so on, and who have the entrée into every house) as her spies to bring her news of patients in every village and hamlet, and the date of their illness, in full detail, as for example, that no child of such a woman is living, and that so and so is barren, and so forth, according to their methods of deceit and their innumerable ways of stratagem and chicanery.

One of the duties of these women is to advise sick women or others to go to Shaikh Sīd Aḥmed, when such a scene as the one we have described takes place. There is nothing of course in the chamber of the so-called Shaikh except the old woman herself who has already become acquainted with what the spies have conveyed to her, and which she repeats, not in her own voice of course, to the sick woman, or to one of her relatives, who implicitly believes in the Shaikh, and impoverishes herself in order to propitiate him.

[1] [In Islamic cosmology the mountain range that surrounds the earth. Tr.]
[2] [Koran, xii, 40; liii, 23, etc. Tr.]

And as for the manner of releasing the "Tied", it is as
755 follows: One of the quacks, whom we have mentioned,
787 measures the *Atr* [see f.n. above, p. 40] of the one who is "*tied*" by the ropes of illusion, and shackled with the chains of worthless beliefs, and says to him, "There is something written against you on a piece of bread which has been eaten by a fish in the sea, and it is not possible to release you from your trouble unless by obtaining this fish." Then he describes to him the appearance of this fish from his own imagination, and asks him for a fine sum for bringing it to him in a few days. When the time comes he brings a fish in his hand in whose mouth he has placed the piece of bread with the letters written thereon, and delivers it to the patient who, when he has opened its mouth and seen what it contains, thereby helping to confirm the statement of the "prescriber," he begins to be cured little by little because of his belief that he would be cured of his illness when he attained [p. 42] his prize, namely, the above-mentioned fish. But there is no doubt that the whole thing is a trick. As for the "prescriber" or "spiritual sage" he has already obtained his fee.

842 Sometimes it happens that the wife of an elderly person dies,
918 after he has exceeded the bounds in procreation for some time, and he marries another wife, only to find that he has no longer the power of procreation, so he repairs to the swindlers who either take the opportunity to cheat him, or "prescribe" for him certain tonics such as ambergris, and other pungent substances such as black pepper (*fulful Sūdānī*), and a powder made from the penis of the crocodile [p. 43] and so on. But all these are of no avail unless to diminish his wealth, and his reason, and his health (if he had any). He is not aware that the time of his youth has passed.

[539] "How far away is the time of youth to one turning back;
Yes, and there is no fear of old age to one going forth."

For Time has assailed him with its burden, and it was most essential for him to spend the rest of his life at ease, protecting his health from the influence of diseases, caused by his previous
931 incontinent behaviour. For there is no more injurious thing for the body, nor one more destructive of life, than sexual indul-

842 Some women who are barren carry a silique of wood dipped in
809 powder of Egyptian natron, and this "prescription" is in
[illegible] fact, said to be advantageous, when the barrenness is due to the acidity of the fluids secreted by the woman's reproductive organs, for it counteracts its effect, without preventing the male fertile germs, as formerly was the case, from reaching the female generative germ.

XX

THE MUTA'AWWAḲA

842 THIS is the woman who gives birth, but whose children die.
955 The best known "cure" is an "operation" which is performed every year, called "the Cutting of the Follower" (*ḳaṭ' al-tabī'a*), which is practised by certain special "Old Wives." The manner of it is that the "old wife" comes to the husband and his spouse and makes them stand in front of one another. Then she takes a fowl which is jet black, without the least blemish in it, kills it, extracts its entrails, and plucks its feathers, and cuts a thread which she has previously joined between the thumbs of the husband and his wife. Then she collects all these things for the safety of the woman, and buries them all under the threshold of her room. Thereupon she departs after receiving a weighty reward in compensation for the fowl. By such acts the women believe that the child will live, as if these had [p. 46] a secret influence on its life. It is customary to repeat this experiment at each birth if success follows it the first time. The payment also is increased two, or three, or four fold, and so on, with each successive year, the mother believing that if she does not do so, the "operation" will not succeed in future.

842 They explain all this by saying that the husband has a
916 mate (*ḳarīna*),[1] one of the Jinn, who is seized with jealousy

[1] [This is a very widespread belief. In most cases, it appears, the "mate" is of the opposite sex. That is, a man is possessed by a *ḳarīna* (fem.); a woman, by a *ḳarīn* (masc.). But there are exceptions noted. Miss Blackman (p. 69 ff.) does not note the sexual difference. Dr. Zwemer, in his work, *The Influence of Animism on Islam*, devotes a complete chapter (VI) to the subject of the *Ḳarīna* or familiar spirit. See below the section entitled "The *Ḳarīna*" p. 46). Tr.]

Many women
756 in the villages are famed for the "cure" of them. One of them is known as Sitt Umm Ḥusain. She resides in the village
757 of Ibrāhīm Aghā in the district of Shubrakhīt. Her "specific" is to take a piece of the hollow stalk of the bamboo (*ghāb Fārisī*), and split it lengthways down the middle, and place in it the skin of the patient's eyelid. In view of its flexibility it squeezes upon the eyelid and hinders its nourishment, so that it becomes violently inflamed, perhaps extending to the neighbouring parts, and destroying the eye. The result[1] of this ill-omened treatment is that the part squeezed becomes affected
[169] with gangrene, the eyelid becomes separated from the eyeball, and the latter becomes exposed to all external influences, great, and small, there being now nothing to protect it from injury, not to mention that the patient through this "operation," becomes ugly and hideous, the sight of him frightening children and offending grown up people.

Many others besides Sitt Umm Ḥuṣain there are who go round the villages rooting out eyelids as if they thought Allah created them unintentionally.

XXVIII

HEALING OF THOSE BORN BLIND (CATARACTOUS)

757 A NATIVE of Mandūra in the Gharbīya Province claims that
278 he has done some of the things for which Jesus (on whom be peace !) was noted, and has made the blind to see (or, rather, to describe him by what results from his works, he gives those who have eyes, eyes to see). What he does is, he anoints the ophthalmic patient with *kohl*, which he makes himself, and in ten days he is "cured."

I was informed by one of the leading people of the Buḥaira Province about some antimony [*kohl*] which he bought from

[1] [Dr. A. F. MacCallan, writing in the *Egyptian Gazette* (April 7th, 1927) on the development of Ophthalmology in early Arabic Literature mentions this popular Fellahīn "cure," and adds: "*The trichiasisentropion is occasionally cured* (by this method), *but always at the expense of a shortened upper lid, and the frequent production of lagophthalmos.*" Tr.]

4: Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890)

this quack at a crushing price. When I examined it I found the bulk of it to be powder of ginger [*zangabīl*]. All the people of the provinces believe that these substances are exciting and burning in proportion to their usefulness. But what I say is, that the employment of ginger as *kohl* is very like the use of the powder of *Jakarītī* (?) one of the plants of Brazil. (It is violently corrosive and is used to produce artificial purulent ophthalmia).

The Moorish quacks employ in cases of ophthalmia a medicine which one of them divulged to me as a great secret, saying that it was composed as follows:

(1) One drachm of the liver of a cock with ten claws;[1]
(2) One drachm of clarified fluid from the eyes of an old hoopoe[2]; [p. 56] (3) five drachms of *shūnīz* (i.e. "*the black seed.*")[3]

Boil the whole over a slow fire, and after it becomes dry and powdery, let it be used as *kohl*; then the old hazinesses will become clear, and it will put an end to the ulcerations of the eye and cataract.

XXIX

THE INFLUENCE OF GUISES AND TITLES AND APPELLATIONS

FATE has decreed that the Egyptian should neglect his rights and rate himself lower than the Westerner with his different origin and nationality. So you see him not only being let down in the eyes of Europeans (who have some right for glorying and boasting on account of the benefits they have attained in Science and Civilisation), but also in the eyes of such

[1] [The colloquial word used is *mu'awshar*, and it is said that when such a cock enters the house and crows, an angel will appear. Tr.]
[2] [The *hudhud*, or *hidhid*, the celebrated bird in the Solomon Saga.]
[3] [This is the seed of the Fennel flower, black cummin, and is often named in the vernacular, *habbat-al-baraka*, the "seed of the blessing," because its other name, the "*black seed*" is not propitious. See the *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, XII*, 207. Tr.]

4: Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 (ca. 1890) MR13 Fellahin MR13 Egypt MR1

E F 756 755

the medical sciences, but were all liable to be duped by him. One of his claims was that he could extract the heart and the liver and replace them by the corresponding parts of a dog. We rejected this statement on account of its absurdity and want of agreement with the canons of medicine. When he saw our opposition he said, " Do not wonder at that for I have cured this last year 40,000 [p. 59] patients suffering from *ascites abdominalis* in Mecca alone." Then we became more sceptical than ever of his statements seeing that the whole population of Mecca is not more than 60,000, and two thirds of them have not always this disease. That would be absurd. So, when he rose to go, he invited a number of us to accompany him, amongst whom was as it happened that excellent Doctor 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Efendī Fahmī, chief physician of the Government Hospital at Assiut, and Doctor 'Abdallāh Efendī Shaukat, head of the Ḳaṣr al-'Ainī Hospital.

When we arrived at his house we found him the centre of the afflicted and the refuge of the unfortunate. Crowds streamed towards his dwelling from every side so that they blocked the way for the passer-by. When we were seated he began " treating " his patients. This was after he had laid aside his robes and put on others which made him look like the successor of Al-Ḥāriṯh ibn Kalada.[1] Among the crowd he had a girl afflicted with filthy suppurating scrofulous glands, so he called on his servant Ṣiddīḳ to prepare a poultice of *lait caillé* (*leben zebādī* or *yaghourt*). Then he himself brought forward a dish from which he took out a little powder of sweet marjoram which he scattered on the poultice, and put this on the neck of the poor girl, whose mother took her away to where she might roll about on account of the burning pain (after she had satisfied the monetary demands of the professed physician).

E F [164] [278]

Anyone who is acquainted with science knows that it is not possible to guard against the harmful effects of gathered pus except by extracting it by means of surgical instruments.

E F 756 278

After the sick-visitation had come to an end we went up with him that he might show us his chamber of drugs. We found it a spacious place with hundreds of vessels containing

[1] [See note above p. 43.]

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 (ca. 1890) MR13 Fellahin MR13 Egypt MR1

E F 756 878

drugs, salts and acids and alkalis with labels, on which were written their names in Latin, in very indistinct letters on account of their age. The bystander could not help suspecting that this was merely the leavings of some pharmacist, which this man had bought up after the death of the owner.

On turning my head to the right I saw written on one of these bottles " sulphuric acid," so I asked his lordship about the contents of the bottle, in order to try him, that it might put an end to my suspicions regarding him. He answered straightway, " This is oil of mandragora, or apples of the Jinn." Then he produced a vessel gilded on the outside and said, " This is the *Kohl* (stibium) of the Forty. It puts and end to obscuration of the surface of the eye, and I produced it myself by boiling it in oil of rose mixed with the grease of serpents forty times." He generously presented each of us with some to experiment with, but when we had left his dwelling we threw what was in our hands on the ground, except one of us who was determined to try it. He put a little of it in his eye, and the next day was afflicted with ophthalmia of the cornea which took him fifteen days' treatment to get over its evil effects.

Mark the difference, O you who are intelligent and skilful, between the dwelling of this ignoramus aping the physician and [p. 61] the clinic of one of our keen native doctors. You will find the difference distinctly visible. While the former rejoices in success and prosperity, the latter suffers ill-luck and neglect.

XXX

HEADACHE (ṢUDĀ')[1]

F 164 953

This is applied to many illnesses, but is only rarely an original illness. It arises from decay in the bone of the occiput,

[1] [Professor E. G. Browne, in his Fitzpatrick Lectures on *Arabian Medicine* mentions (p. 4) that this noun of pain appears in the Latin version of the Kānūn of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) as Soda (*Sermo universalis de Soda*), a term which must have bewildered those without the Arabic original. Tr.]

The manner of it is this: The "old wife" orders the windows of the sick room to be closed first of all. Next she orders him not to eat anything but thin bread and honey during the space of ten days. On the eleventh day a large fire is kindled in the sick room [p. 84] and the "old wife" places on it her incense (which consists of pieces of sulphate of natural mercury) that is, cinnabar [*zungafr*, or sulphuret of mercury]. There goes up a thick vapour which fills the emptiness of the room. Then the "old wife" leaves her patient and goes out quickly that his punishment may be endured in solitude, since he inhales the quick poison of the fumes of the quicksilver flying about. I was informed by a trustworthy person that one patient died after two hours of the "fumigating," though, before it, he was fairly well, his illness not being dangerous or fatal. This mistake is common in all the districts of Egypt. And no matter how the "old wife's" methods or herbs may vary, they do not produce the desired effect nor any part of it, unless indeed the object of destruction. It is suitable, in the most expeditious manner, for that.

XLI

'ISHBA

As some obtain a "cure" by incense, others, both men and women, dispense with medicine by means of *'ishba* (sarsaparilla), which is too well-known to be named here, even children know it by heart, for they think that in it is a divine secret opposed to syphilis. But they are wrong, seeing that is has no use at all to-day as far as we know. Some people reckon it itself and sassafras, and guaiacum [lit. "wood of the prophets"] to be of the herbs causing sweat, but in my opinion, tea is better than any of them.

It is quite certain that the bulk of the *fellāḥīn* in these days know the truth of what we have said, because of its inefficacy, and that they have turned aside from it. Nowadays they know

another thing; you will see them coming to the cities and asking in hospitals or pharmacies for it [p. 85] by the name of *yadūr*, meaning potassium iodide. Yes, they are right as to its being beneficial, but not in all attacks of syphilis, seeing that it is proved that it is not the least use in the first two attacks. (And in particular they do not know syphilis from anything else, for they are ignorant of the diagnosis of the disease and consequently miss the cure.)

We have previously hinted at a remedy for syphilis. But in general there is no escape from consulting a physician. The patient who fears for his family, or the family who fear for him, should hasten to get away from the disease, since it is contagious.

XLII

"MIXING" (MADHAḲ)

Madhaḳ literally means "mixing."[1]

(And in truth they are *mixed* when they err in its treatment.) It is [a name] applied in the villages to a kind of muscular swelling (or rheumatism) which strikes the muscle under the shoulder-blade, and the muscle below the spine sometimes. And they "prescribe" for him who is smitten with it, that he should lean against the door of a room facing the East, with his feet above and his head below, and meeting the ground with his palms so that the weight of his body will be upon them. And he must have filled his mouth with water, and must remain in this position about ten minutes at least, until he becomes giddy (from congestion of the brain) and throws himself to the ground. The harm of this "method" is obvious and useless [p. 86] except to make those who do it like monkeys. Perhaps the patient overturns on to his back or falls upon his *pia mater* [*Arabice* (أم الرأس) "mother of the head"], and there receives the reward of his act, or the result of his folly and his inability to imitate others.

[1] [This "mixing" or ambiguity cannot be translated.]

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

XLIII

THE HORN OF THE RHINOCEROS AND POISONS

ALL internal diseases for which the "old wife" is not enabled to perfect a trick to impose on the intellects of the people of the provinces, she attributes in her diagnosis to *Sukwa* [see below]. She says to the patient: "Oh, my son, you have *Sukwa* and nothing will be of any avail except the horn of the rhinoceros, which must be placed in a china vessel and exposed to the dew all night and drunk upon an empty stomach in the morning."

Now the "horn of the rhinoceros" (*karn al-khartīt*) consists of pieces of the horns of cows or of buffaloes. Pilgrims or merchants from the Sudan bring them and spin the tale how that they are the antidote (*tiriāk*) for poisons. Whereas even if they were rhinoceros horns, as they assert, there are no special beneficial qualities in them at all, as far as we know. But it is well known that the volatile salts of the English are extracted from the horns of the hart, or [p. 87] mountain buck, but that is not the rhinoceros. Whereas if we imagined, as they do, that these two are one and the same, they would not have brought a conclusive proof, since on their putting the horn in water the salt in it does not melt so as to be of benefit. But what we do know is that the volatile salts of the English are no good in counteracting poisons (except alcoholic poisoning or intoxication).

It is well-known that the word *Sukwa* is applied generally to pulmonary consumption accompanied by loss of blood on coughing. The patient must be well-fed, and guarded as much as possible from cold. He must leave the place where he caught it for dry warm places, and keep away from crowds and not neglect moderate exercise. And let his people guard against allowing him to spit upon articles or on the ground. (For if they knew that the poison that the "old wife" shuns is expectorated with the saliva, and that healthy people breathe it and fall into the clutches of Death, they would beware of the evil consequences. So let them know that it is one of the most

4: Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890)

and place him on the back of a she-ass having its feet tied, so that the back of the sick should coincide with the back of the ass, and one of the " doctors " beats her while the other holds the head of the patient. Then the she-ass jumps violently. It is said that there is mighty healing in her. One of the " sagacious ones " enlarged upon the success of it in his case once. When I asked him concerning the diagnosis of his disease at that time, I knew that a kidney-stone had stopped in his *Ḥālib* [p. 89] (i.e. the canal that conducts the urine from the kidneys into the urinary bladder) so the leaping of the ass helped its rolling and slipping.

But the leaping of the ass is no use in colic of the stomach or of the colon, or inflammation of the spinal marrow.

XLV

TONICS FOR THE VENEREAL FACULTY

THE seeds which are matrimonial tonics and incitements to coition and whose secrets they spread abroad in cities, and which many simpletons and rich people who pay their prices at recognized rates, rush to purchase from them, are all aids to the destruction of health, hastening on ruin. They are not of the least use for the object aimed at by these foolish people, nay, the result is the opposite of that, as those, who serve Science by experience assert (in spite of their being deceived at first by errors). And we do not know that true Materia Medica mentions drugs which prolong the time of propagation or strengthen the venereal faculty, unless some false opinions of certain Westerners which are considered like the opinions of " quacks " in our country.

They have said that the injection of a solution of the testicles of a fox and the Indian pig is advantageous, but experience contradicts this.

[p. 91.] And they may believe that the dye of Spanish flies[1]

[1] [*lit.* Indian flies.]

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890)

is sure of success, but this success does not materialize unless at the moment when the person is on the brink of the grave, and in the stages of poisoning for which they are no effectual remedies.

XLVI

THE "BEAD" OF THE COW (KHARZAT-AL-BAḲARA)

Some women assert, and butchers agree with them, that there is in the neck or bellies of some cattle a piece of suet which has a wonderful property of producing fat in emaciated women, and so they go to extremes to obtain it. The butchers vie with one another in enhancing its price until on occasion it has reached ten guineas.

We cannot imagine what idea drove the ladies to run after this goal, for beauty does not call for size and fatness. It is enough for a woman that she be healthy and of good deportment. It is all one to her husband whether she be bursting with fat or slender-waisted. The truth is, health is not gained by fatness, but fat is generally one of the accompaniments of health.

But if we grant that health follows fat, who will prove that the "bead" of the cow, which has acquired this wonderful fame, has the least effect? I understand that Kaufmann the German, goes so far as to say that the "bead" of the cow, famous [p. 92] among the women of Cairo, is nothing but the chyme[1] of cattle.

And if his investigation of this subject is barren of scientific results, nevertheless perhaps it enables us to explain this singular belief.

As for the "old wives" of Egypt, they do not order lean women anything else but this.

[1] [The Arabic text has *ḥimâs*, for which I read *kimâs* (chyme). I am unable to verify the opinion of Kaufmann. Tr.]

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

XLVII

MUFATTÁḲA[1]

THE "old wives" make this out of a collection of materials whose number to their statement, reaches forty kinds, the bulk of it of oily fruits. The fat of black beetles is reported to be necessary to the completion of its ingredients. It appears from its composition that it is hard to digest and of an injurious nature. It causes turbidness of digestion and diarrhœa. So it is more harmful than the "bead" of the cow [see above]. But the "old wives" have other compounds besides this, such as "the Seven grains" (سبع حبوب) [see illustration in Miss Blackman, op. cit. p. 79] and "orange jelly" (مطبوخ النارنج).

XLVIII

ECZEMA (ṢAFRA)

THIS is a name used generally in the provinces for many skin diseases which are a sort of eczema (*Ḳūb*), and especially for the disease called psoriasis. (I mean the "pearly" variety, because it has scabs shining like mother of pearl). Those afflicted with this disease go to Shaikh Farag Abū Maḥmūd of Munāshela in the district of Shubrakhīt in the Province of Buḥaira. He cauterizes them upon the metatarsus of their feet opposite the tops of the three last toes, and orders them not to go near water for forty days. The strange thing is that this condition does not suit the Fellāḥ whose food comes from sowing [p. 93] especially while he is barefooted. Then how should he not be wet when he is continually immersed?

[1] [This is a kind of sweetmeat or *ḥalāwa*, made of molasses. I had the opportunity given me of tasting it once. If its dark oily appearance does not repel, its taste does. I can understand now after seeing its colour why the rumour goes that it is made from the flesh of black beetles, as the author states. TR.]

PART TWO[1]

[The author's rather laboured introductory remarks may be briefly summarized thus. The printing of Part Two was slightly delayed for two years (from 1892–4). In the meanwhile he received enquiries concerning the work from all sides, especially from orientalists and anthropologists. In this way he was encouraged to publish what follows.]

I

THE SHABSHABA AND "MILKING OF THE STARS"

THE strongest "cure" and most successful drug tried among women to restrain their husbands from flirting with other women and keeping them to themselves, is the *Shabshaba*, and the "*milking of the stars*" (*ḥalb al-nugūm*) comes near it. They are almost alike so that in the course of time their two charms have become confused. (Sometimes they are employed for the "cure" of some of the nervous diseases which the common people assert to be due to the Jinn). The *Shabshaba* is very rare in Egypt. Only certain well-known old wives know its real nature. The most famous of these is the Shaikha Khadra al-Aṣwānīya al-Ṣūfīya. She was until 1309 [= 1891] living in a cell at the foot of the [p. 4] Muḳaṭṭam Hills (Cairo) near the tomb of Sīdī 'Umar ibn al-Fāriḍ. [The famous mystical poet (1181–1235). Tr.]. I believe her name is not absent from the memory of those ladies who knew her and verified the success of her "method" and who used to throng to her.

[1] [Printed in the name of the Tenth International Congress of Orientalists held at Geneva, September, 1894.]

"cure" all, namely, to segregate them for forty-one days in a room darkened and tightly locked, without feeding them during their stay there except with thin bread and molasses (lit. black honey). This woman comes to visit them every morning only, and performs on them the "cure" by a wonderful system. If any of them experiences a violent pain she makes for her a ring or two for her temple or her neck, or else she cauterizes her with iron rings in the foregoing places.

Women come to her to be "treated" for complete "adhesive" obscurations, or retinal inflammation, or atrophy of the visual nerve, or any other of the grievous diseases all of which the woman (quack) characterizes by the name of "blindness." She begins by administering to them a drop of the juice of an onion for one week. In the second week she makes for them a collyrium of ginger (of equal parts of sugar-candy and ginger). [p. 13.] In the remaining three weeks she drops in their eyes a drop composed of dew which has fallen overnight upon the leaves of the Persian cane (or bamboo), mixed with the powder of burnt bones of crows.

In the Gharbīya province, in a village called *Kafr Khidr*, about a quarter of an hour distant from *Ṭanṭā*, there is a man who lays claim to a medicine for the eyes. He has harmed thousands of God's creatures, because his "method" is quicker in damaging than the previous one. He is prone to make surgical operations on all who seek him out, whatever the disease may be. One of my medical friends told me (as follows): I visited the man one day when he had just begun to perform an operation. He split the cornea with a broad knife, and all the moistures of the eye flowed out, and in a word, there were cast out with them the iris and the internal covers. The man, however, did not become confused, but bound up the eye of the patient, and said to him, "Now you will go home and sleep upon your back without moving in the least or speaking a word during three days. If you do not do that then I am not responsible for your eye, if anything happens to it." My friend said, I was sorry for this poor fellow, but I checked myself, and said that it was not necessary to grieve for the loss of sight when Allah has blinded insight.

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890)

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

III

RHEUMATISM AND DONKEY MARROW

ONE of the ancient "prescriptions" successfully used for *Ḥidār* of the joints (i.e. rheumatism) is taking the marrow from the feet of a dead donkey and rubbing it on the part affected for seven days. They go to extremes in the matter until the patient is compelled to bring it from remote regions, after his family have set spies and observers in all the villages to inform them of the death of a donkey, male or female. Sometimes they employ the fat of a camel or serpent.

The true explanation. It is possible that in the spinal substance of the donkey's bone there may be a soothing element, which the learned have not yet discovered. But it is very improbable that there is an element counteracting or removing inflammation, since a patient told me that that marrow is not exciting or burning, but that it is like ordinary fat. Perhaps it may here have some effect on muscular rheumatism, but in [p. 15] the case of rheumatism of the joints it is of little use.

IV

THE UNIQUE ELEMENT (AL-GŌHAR AL-FARD)

THOSE who go back to what we wrote in the first part (page 24) concerning piles and dysentery (*rīḥ al-mash'ūmāt*) will know the secret of those fancies in the villages. But today the crowds of quacks are not satisfied with propagating their errors in the villages, but they go so far as to publish the same in the newspapers. I read in an Arabic newspaper an advertisement by a man called Abū 'Ujaiza of the village of Fīsha, residing in the dwelling of Khawāja Khalīl Kamāl in Ṭanṭā. He "cures" piles in the space of three days, at least,

4: Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 (ca. 1890) MR13 Fellahin MR13 Egypt MR1

F 164 F 757

bone and the eye-lids were swollen and distended, and the eye-ball wound was violently inflamed, veiling the cornea. When I asked him the reasons for the ailment he hesitated somewhat in answering, so I repeated the question and he answered as follows: "There was a cataract in my eye so I went to such and such a doctor." (He mentioned a Greek who used to live in a small tavern in the neighbourhood of the new vegetable market, who claimed a knowledge of medicine for the eyes. The date was Ramaḍān, 1311 = 1893). "He placed ammonia in my eye, and said that after three times it would eat away the granular lids (*laḥmīya*) from the eye, and lo, I am as you see!"

So I subjected him to the treatment counteracting inflammation by means of suitable drops until these ailments were removed. And I declare that if that man had delayed and had not hastened of his own accord to a qualified doctor, his eye would have become a prey to the voracity of the ammonia.

XIV

MĀNASTIR[1] AND WOMEN

E F 278 759

I WAS one day sitting in the shop of one of the druggists in the *wikāla* of *Abū Zaid* in Cairo, when there came to him an old woman, and asked him if he had any *mansir* (sic). So I interrupted by asking her what benefit it had. (This was after I knew that she meant *mānastir*). She said: My son, this is of benefit to women whose bodies are weak because of sleeplessness and disease or irritation. When "the bead of the cow" [see page 76] and *ḳirṭās* and *muṣaṭṭaḥa* [see page 77] are of no avail there is brought to her *mansir* to the weight of an oke.[2] (She means that the weight of the *mānistir* creates in the woman who takes it, fat to the amount of an oke.)

[1] [See above, p. 96.]

[2] [*Ūḳḳa* or *uḳḳa*, the Turkish pound in general use in Egypt, and usually termed *oke* by Europeans. It is equivalent to 2¾ lb. Tr.]

E [804]

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 (ca. 1890) MR13 Fellahin MR13 EGYPT MR1

E F 278 N57

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

After the man had answered her request and she had gone away, I thought about that "remedy," but I did not find it in any way resembling *mānastir*, except that both of them are from inside the testicle (*hiṣya*) of an animal. I was astonished at that. The druggist said to me that in the past this article was asked in connection with this and similar "prescriptions," e.g. as a tonic for coition, and for use in pregnancy, etc. He had men in India searching for it. But to-day the new medicine has nullified these things, and traces remain [p. 29] only on the tongues of "old wives." The laboratory of G——— and F——— and D———[1] has made it easy for us to find this article, however, at a low price since it is imported from Europe. These are the results of the progress of industry. How marvellous it is of Science to abolish it at first in its capacity as a natural product, and then find it (or something counterfeiting it) by way of industry!

E F [illegible]

The true explanation. It is not possible to ascribe *mānastir* to the testicles of an animal unless we consider as true the theory of the Elixir of Judenau (cf. Part I, p. 88 ff) or the bringing back of youth, after old age has come, by means of the testicles of the Indian pig.

I have witnessed the injection of this quintessence during the days when I was in the Ḳaṣr al-'Ainī Hospital. Our Professor, Doctor Ḥasan Pāshā Maḥmūd administered it to an old man called Mūsā, the Shaikh of the village of Ṭurāna in the Province of Buḥaira, who was afflicted with the nervous trembling of old age. But he did not change anything of the state of the patient.

XV

CORNS

F 164 N57

Corns [lit. "Eyes of fish"] named "nails" (*misāmīr*) are one of the ailments [p. 30] of civilisation, or the excess of women

[1] [Here he mentions the names of certain well-known Cairo druggists in the European quarter. Tr.]

4: Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 (ca. 1890) MR13 Fellahin MR13 Egypt MR1

F 164 759

imitating each other. Because corns result from the pressure of tight shoes upon the toes. They "cure" it by placing a piece of tomato upon it, and leaving it for three hours. Then it ceases.

XVI

IN THE VICINITY OF THE BĀB ZUWAILA[1]

F 759

In front of the Bāb Zuwaila, named the Bāb al-Mutawallī, there is a man who sells *kunāfa*[2] too renowned to be forgotten by the consumers of this article. My Professor, Muḥammad Bey Durrī told me about him that he "cures" all kinds of eczema (*ḳūba*) and especially what particularizes the varieties of *karfa* (see p. 68). He had, he told me, a little maid-servant afflicted with this ailment. He directed her to the proper treatment, but an "old wife" took her off with her to that man without his knowledge. The result was good, for she was "cured."

F 757 755

The true explanation. This man employs certain ointments doubly compounded, and since their success is assured he does not abandon the means by enquiring too closely concerning it. We are aware that crowds in the provinces are renowned for this and are called *Ḥāwīyīn* (or snake-charmers) since they recite certain words over a glass containing olive-oil and the yolk of an egg and spit into it. And here is the importance of the slimy mixture composed [p. 32] of the two substances above-mentioned, since by it the effect of outside influences is prevented.

F [758]

Near to that in effect is the juice exuding from the sycamore (which is called "the milk of the sycamore," *leben al-gummaiz*). It is famous among the *fellāḥīn* for the "cure" of different kinds of skin-diseases.

[1] [One of the famous old city-gates of Cairo, also called the *Bāb al-Mutawalli* because a very holy Shaikh of that name is supposed to appear there sometimes. Numerous relics of hair, rags and teeth are suspended from its nails by the superstitious folk who hope for a "cure" or a blessing thereby. Tr.]

E [755]

[2] [i.e. sweet vermicelli. Tr.]

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890)

FOLK MEDICINE IN MODERN EGYPT

XVII

"WINKING" (ṬARFA)

SLIGHT shocks falling upon the eye-ball cause irritation which often leads to a dangerous state on most occasions. All such afflictions arising from an external influence are named by the common people *Ṭarfa*. They have sundry "cures" for it. One of these is effective for the time being. It consists of closing the eyelid and placing the hand outspread above it. Then another person puts his mouth to this hand and blows upon it with his foul breath, deep breaths one after the other. Shortly after we see them ordering the milk of a woman to be brought and a drop placed in the eye. Then it is "cured."

The true explanation. As for the blowing upon the eye, it is of little account, since it has no real influence upon it. But milk has been used since ancient times for placing [p. 33] in the eye for all light irritations which occur therein. It is very good. Many *koḥl* manufacturers still order it even to-day.

The true treatment. The handiest and simplest thing for the patient is to boil a little Greek camomile [*bâbûnig Rûmî*] (or "the chickens of 'Ali's mother") and throw into that hot mixture a piece of tissue, which he places at once upon his eye for the space of a quarter of an hour for two hours. Remove all customary eye-salves. There is no harm in using human or animal milk, since it mollifies the inflamed condition. But if the eye is in a serious state, then the first thing is to hasten to an oculist.

164 season. The "old wives" "prescribe" for them the white of eggs mixed with spirit of tutty, or *tūtiyā khalīlī* (oxide of zinc and cadmium and their sulphates). As a result the eye will be "cured" with marvellous rapidity.

The true explanation. The "old wives" pretend that this tutty has a hidden power in attracting the redness of the eye and sucking it up completely. The truth of the matter is that the majority of the eyes which they diagnose as "split" are affected with chronic granular ophthalmia. They are affected by sharp twinges caused by congestion. [p. 42.] Indeed the spirit of tutty does influence temporarily, and that is on account of its arresting the inflamed vessels whereby the eye becomes clear. But it lasts only for a little, until the malady returns with greater force.

The true treatment. There are special remedies for it, and certain operations. Let the patient, however, in these circumstances consult eye-specialists on account of the danger of this serious malady.

XXV

ḤASAN AGHĀ IN DAMANHŪR

159 ḤASAN AGHĀ, above-mentioned, is famous for the "cure" of stone, and extracting it from the urinary bladder. His reputation is widespread, and patients resort to him from all quarters. (And not only those suffering from stone but from any illness in the bladder of uncertain symptoms.) He has an agency in Damanhūr which he has made like a hospital for his 152 numerous patients. His method is to begin by bringing a large plate full of hot water, in which he seats the patient for a little. Then he inserts two fingers of his left hand inside the man's rectum and slips between them a knife with which he wounds the patient's vitals. The blood flows in torrents. Sometimes the patient faints when he sees the blood; sometimes he screams asking for relief. Then our clever quack

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

tion, from which even the displaced functionary and his abettors do not escape. The hangman's assistant of yesterday is sentenced to be hanged, the bastinadoer to be beaten, the *kashkatib* or chief secretary to imprisonment, immense taxes are imposed, and all decisions are set down on a sheet of paper. There is no pardon for the condemned unless on the payment of a few piasters as backshish. Thus they move from house to house, the taxes being levied in the form of backshish. Three days does the capricious rule of the ephemeral tyrant last; at length he, that is his dress, is condemned to death by burning, and from the ashes creeps out the slavish Fellah. In the times of good-natured Mohammed Ali the abu nerus is said to have ventured even to approach his throne, but the harmless jest has now fallen a good deal out of practice. The ancients also celebrated feasts when the Nile was at its height, in the month of Tût, as, for instance, that of Hermes on the 19th of this month. The anniversary of the opening of the canal is kept only at Cairo.

BIRTH-DAY CEREMONIES.

The monotony of the work-day life of the Mohammedan, interrupted by no Sunday, is richly and agreeably varied by domestic ceremonies and observances. However thrifty or niggardly he usually is, on such occasions he spares no expense.

When the time comes that a child is to see the light the midwife makes her appearance with her seat, and displays the greatest activity on behalf of her suffering charge; female relatives and neighbours also come in crowds to encourage and advise. It is often sought to lighten the difficult task by hanging opium about the mother, or making her eat the drug. The newly-born child is merely dried, not washed, and immediately laid upon a corn sieve; beside its head lies the knife with which the umbilical cord has been cut, and corn is scattered round about. This procedure is intended to drive away the *karine*, that is, the child's evil brother or sister from the spirit realm that always makes its appearance and ter-